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### What Makes a Family

Our feet cast soft footprints in the Palm Beach sand. The stars glittered and were reflected in the shimmering ocean. The moonlit night wrapped us in an aura of magic. My family, on a late night walk at the beach.

I wandered ahead, immersed in my own thoughts. Then a shout brought me back to earth. “Miranda!” my mom called. “Come here! You’ve got to see this!” I ran over to where my mother, father, and little brother were standing. They were all looking down. I squinted to make out what they were pointing at and finally made out a dark blob on the sand—a baby sea turtle! Newly hatched, it was determinedly crawling to shore. The cute, 5-inch-long turtle pushed its way to the ocean. The waves had seemed so calm lapping at my feet, but suddenly, from the perspective of the newborn turtle, they looked thunderous. He pushed himself along, digging a pattern of delicate grooves in the sand. We stood behind the little turtle, cooing, “Come on, come on!” or sighing, “Aww...” when a wave pushed him back again. At one point, my mother wanted to pick him up and set him safely in the water, but we all knew that we had to let it be. The turtle had to do it on its own.

As I stared at the small creature, I saw it in a new light. I saw myself, crawling towards the waves of my future, with my family behind me cheering me on. Just like my mother wanted to help the little turtle, she wanted to help me, to carry me past harm’s way. She knew, though, that to cushion my ride would be to deny me true experience. I’d have to go through all the waves of life: struggles, lost jobs, poor grades, or

disappointments. Still, my family would be behind me, and that meant everything would be okay. The full force of the moment hit me, and in that second I realized that this was family: the encouragement and nurturing support that kept me going.

I don't know how long we stood there, but it was long after the turtle had pushed through the breakers to its home. I stared, mesmerized at the place where the turtle had disappeared and thought. I thought of the way my family rallied around each other when my grandfather died. I thought of our family movie nights that always ended with thousands of new inside jokes. I thought of all the trips we had taken, of when I learned to ride a bike and when I learned to swim. Like the sea turtle had the full moon to guide him, I had my family.

I wrapped my arm around my mom's waist and we turned to walk back up the beach.